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LETTER DATED 2 MAY 1996 FROM THE CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I. OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF CAMEROON TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Pursuant to my letter of 15 April 1996 concerning the border dispute between Cameroon and Nigeria, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a letter dated 30 April 1996 from His Excellency Mr. Ferdinand Léopold Oyono, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cameroon, in which he informs you of new attacks launched by Nigerian troops against Cameroonian positions on 21, 22, 23 and 24 April 1996 (see annex).

In view of the gravity of the situation, the Minister for Foreign Affairs reiterates the urgent need to begin the fact-finding mission which the Secretary-General had proposed to send to the Bakassi Peninsula and which the Security Council had approved in principle.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Moussa ALIOU
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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ANNEX

Letter dated 30 April 1996 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cameroon addressed to the President of the Security Council

Further to my previous correspondence, in particular to my most recent letter of 22 February 1996, and to your letter of 29 February 1996, all of which concerned developments in the conflict between the Republic of Cameroon and the Federal Republic of Nigeria over the Bakassi Peninsula, I should like, once again, to inform you of the following:

On 21, 22, 23 and 24 April 1996, Nigerian troops launched attacks on positions of the Cameroonian Army and occupied new villages deeper into Cameroonian territory. For example, the troops took the large village of Benkoro situated at the southern tip of the Peninsula, 16 kilometres on the Cameroonian side of the international border.

In addition to this village, attacks by the same troops on 3 and 17 February 1996 - the subject of my above-mentioned letter (S/1996/125 of 23 February 1996) - resulted in the occupation of the sub-prefecture of Idabato; the village of Idabato; Kombo a Janea fishery; Guidi Guidi; Kombo a Wase; Kombo Miyangadu; Uzama; Aladine; and Kilima.

From our point of view, Nigeria's deployment of more and more troops and military equipment during the past few weeks is a clear indication of its intention to launch a large-scale offensive as part of its plan to annex the Peninsula. In fact, in addition to daily flights by Nigerian reconnaissance aircraft over Cameroonian positions:

- Nigeria currently has, in the area and its vicinity, approximately 10,000 infantry in a state of alert and deployed as follows: 2,300 in Cameroonian territory along a 40-kilometre front (first echelon); 3,000 as support troops (second echelon) stationed at Ikang in Nigerian territory at a cable's length away from the international border; and, finally, 4,000 reservists (third echelon) at the Calabar base.

- Its infantry makes intensive use of large-calibre (120-122 mm) heavy mortars, boats equipped with 40-mm guns, rocket-launchers, combat helicopters ...

- At sea, its amphibious units operate on gunboats, on which they wear the uniform of the Cameroonian army, on civilian trawlers and, finally, disguised as fishermen, in dugout canoes.

The violence and the intensity of the combat over the past two months has caused losses of human lives and serious material damage, and has had grave consequences at the humanitarian level. In particular, as regards the humanitarian consequences, it should be noted that the Cameroonian side has been affected as follows:

- More than 700 people have been displaced from the town of Isangélé to the town of Ekondo Titi, 50 km away, as a result of the shelling of Isangélé by Nigerian troops. The Red Cross has set up a refugee camp at Ekondo Titi.

- Between 120 and 130 soldiers have disappeared. Taken prisoner by Nigeria, the soldiers are still being held and maltreated. Moreover, the Nigerian authorities have obstinately refused to provide the Red Cross with a list of these soldiers.

This new aggression by Nigeria is a flagrant violation of the protective measures brought to the attention of our two Governments by the Order of 15 March 1996 of the International Court of Justice. It also displays contempt for the request addressed to them by the members of the Security Council of the United Nations on 29 February 1996.

The increasing gravity of this situation and the irresponsible attitude of Nigeria with respect to its international obligations and commitments prove a posteriori the relevance both of the protective measures indicated by the International Court of Justice and the decision of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to send a fact-finding mission to the Bakassi Peninsula, as well as the urgent need to dispatch this mission as soon as possible.

Faced with the prospect of an escalation that it would like to avoid, the Government of Cameroon calls upon the members of the international community, both individually and collectively, to use their influence to make Nigeria respect its international obligations and commitments. However, if Nigeria persists in its aggression and continues to seize Cameroonian territory little by little, Cameroon reserves the right to exercise, at any time and using any means it deems necessary, its right of self-defence in order to safeguard - making the supreme sacrifice if need be - its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

(Signed) Ferdinand Léopold OYONO